



**INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE
CONTROL COMMISSION**

CICAD

Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

**GROUP OF EXPERTS ON CHEMICAL SUBSTANCES
AND PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTS**
August 13-15, 2019
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DRAFT FINAL REPORT
GROUP OF EXPERTS ON CHEMICAL SUBSTANCES
AND PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTS

I. BACKGROUND

The Group of Experts on Chemical Substances and Pharmaceutical Products of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD/OAS) is the technical forum at the hemispheric level for member states to exchange information, experiences, and best practices on the control of precursor chemicals used in the production of illicit drugs in the region.

During the sixty-fourth regular session of CICAD in Washington, D.C., November 19-21, 2018, the Commission approved the final report on the meeting of the Group of Experts on Chemical Substances and Pharmaceutical Products ([CICAD/doc.2413/18](#)) held in Panama City, Panama, May 29-31, 2018. The Commission also approved Argentina's candidacy to chair the Group for the period 2019-2020.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Group of Experts on Chemical Substances and Pharmaceutical Products** of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD/OAS) met in the city of Buenos Aires, August 13-15, 2019 at the Coastguard Building of the Argentine Naval Prefecture. The meeting participants included 36 experts from 10 member states: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Guyana, Honduras, Peru, Saint Lucia, and the United States; as well as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Cooperation Programme between Latin America, the Caribbean, and the European Union on Drugs Policies (COPOLAD).

As established in the schedule of activities ([CHEM/AGE.1/19](#)), the meeting started with a roundtable where participants had the opportunity to present and comment on the principal challenges facing the countries/agencies in controlling the diversion of chemical substances that can be used as precursors in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as good control practices/strategies being implemented to address those challenges.

The principal objective of the meeting was to review and update the *“Model Regulations for the Control of Chemical Substances Used in the Illicit Manufacture of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.”* This document represents an important reference tool for member states to develop/update their domestic regulations/legislation on this subject.

In addition, during the working sessions, presentations were made on the following topics:

- Proposed controls for addressing trends related to New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and the challenges posed by “design” chemical precursors in Argentina;
- The U.S. perspective on the topic of chemical precursors and diversion investigations;
- The United Nations Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs;
- An update on COPOLAD's work in the area of chemical precursor control.

The meeting's final report will be subject to approval during the sixty-sixth regular session of CICAD to be held in Miami, United States, November 19-21, 2019.

III. MINUTES

Tuesday, August 13

Welcoming remarks presented by the following authorities:

- Eugenio Burzaco, Secretary of Security, Ministry of Security
- Martín Verrier, Under-Secretary for Narcotrafficking Control, Ministry of Security
- Roberto Moro, Secretary of SEDRONAR
- Rafael Parada, Chief, Supply Reduction Unit, OAS/CICAD

During the **roundtable**, participants had the opportunity to present and comment on the principal challenges their countries/agencies are facing to control the diversion of chemical substances that can be used as precursors in the illicit production of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as best practices/strategies to address them.

The principal challenges identified by the participants were as follows:

1. Challenges related to the diversion of chemical substances:

- Constant change in the methods used by criminal organizations to divert precursors;
- The involvement of increasingly specialized actors in the drug trafficking chain, who are often engaged in legal businesses;
- The continued emergence of substances, together with the countries' difficulty trying to include them rapidly in control lists;
- The difficulty some countries have in identifying New Psychoactive Substances (NPS);
- The countries traditionally called "transit" countries are being used to complete the processing of illicit drugs, given easy access to certain key chemical substances;
- Drug traffickers take advantage of authorities' lack of knowledge regarding the use of specific substances during these synthesis processes.

2. Legal and regulatory frameworks

- Need for countries to continually update their legal and regulatory frameworks on the subject.

3. Challenges related to the lack of information-sharing and cooperation at the inter-agency/national, regional, and international levels, including:

- Various agencies share national-level responsibility for control of precursor chemicals and sometimes there are no mechanisms for effective and secure information-sharing among those agencies;
- The sharing of information/intelligence for the purpose of updating on the *modus operandi* of criminal organizations is limited or not sufficiently dynamic with border countries;
- Lack of information and awareness regarding the increasing importance of certain precursors used in the manufacture of synthetic drugs, with the result that authorities continue to focus their priorities on traditional substances.

4. Challenges related to private industry:

- The use of legal substances in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychoactive substances hampers controls;

- On occasion, national restrictions/regulations are challenged by different private entities that argue that industry is being limited;
- The difficulty of finding effective control mechanisms that do not have a negative effect on private industry.

5. Challenges related to the material resources and technical capacities of forensic laboratories:

- Limited capacity in some countries to effectively operate their forensic laboratories, recognizing the importance of acting preventively and not reactively.

6. Challenges linked to the need to strengthen operational control, forensic, customs, and seizure mechanisms, including:

- Lack of forensic capacities and technical knowledge regarding these substances;
- Need to standardize criteria for addressing the problem;
- The importance of control agencies keeping up-to-date given the constant diversification of substances, routes, concealment methods, and other factors.

In terms of **successful measures and good practices**, the delegations highlighted the importance of:

- Maintaining good and fluid inter-agency coordination such as through the creation of inter-institutional technical working groups to monitor the market of precursors and NPS;
- Making regulatory changes, as applicable, and developing updated legislation on the subject;
- Strengthening coordination among states – particularly border states – for example, by promoting bilateral or multilateral investigations;
- Promoting the use of international cooperation resources, such as the United Nations Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs and CICAD’s Model Regulations for the Control of Chemical Substances Used in the Illicit Manufacture of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances;
- Strengthening cooperation mechanisms with the private sector;
- Strengthening technical and operational capacities, for example, specialized and undercover agents; training dogs to detect fentanyl and its analogues; granting border agencies the power to open packages; launching real-time data-sharing systems; establishing programs to register devices; sharing samples of seized substances among agencies involved, and other measures;
- Streamlining and optimizing processes to classify chemical precursors, for example, through generic classification of precursors and making decisions based on their “class” and not based on the substance itself;
- Generating innovative actions using “big data” for decision-making.

Presentation: Trends in New Psychoactive Substances in Argentina, the Challenge of Design Chemical Precursors, and Control Initiatives to Address the Problem

- Deborah Maestre, Coordinator, National Registry of Chemical Precursors, Under-Secretariat for Narcotrafficking Control, Ministry of Security of Argentina

Mrs. Maestre gave a presentation ([DOC.2](#)) on trends in NPS, the challenges that design chemical precursors pose, and control initiatives implemented in Argentina to address the situation. She presented the different existing approaches in terms of models for the regulation of NPS and focused on the “generic” control system and the new legislation to be implemented in the country. Regarding chemical precursors, Mrs. Maestre indicated that the increasing availability of design precursor substances has a large impact on the illicit synthetic drug market. Similarly, she indicated that the

production methods used in clandestine laboratories are constantly evolving to evade the controls. Finally, she discussed the detection of new substances utilized in the manufacture of narcotic drugs and design chemical precursors, as in the cases of alpha-phenylacetoacetamide (APAA), which is used to obtain P-2-P for later production of illicit amphetamine and methamphetamine, and ether acid *3,4-MDP-2-P methyl glycidic acid*, and sodium salt, which are used to obtain 3,4-MDP-2-P for later illicit production of MDMA. As she explained, following INCB recommendation, in 2019 these chemical precursors were added to Table I of the 1988 Convention.

Presentation: Precursor Chemical Trends: the U.S. Perspective

- Liqun L. Wong, Unit Chief, Drug and Chemical Evaluation Section, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

Mrs. Wong ([DOC.5](#)) gave a presentation on the subject of synthetic drugs in the United States, with particular emphasis on the fact that synthetic opioids, primarily fentanyl and its analogues today present a public health crisis in the country. During her presentation, she stressed that in the last year the enforcement agencies have reported more than 90,000 synthetic opioid encounters/reports and that the *Siegried* method is being used in the clandestine production of fentanyl. The presenter added that one of the major challenges these laboratories pose is that a single site can not only produce powdered fentanyl but can also make tablets/pills, reaching production levels of up to 20,000 counterfeit tablets per day, which are later sold on the illicit market as oxycodone. Mrs. Wong also mentioned that another challenge that enforcement authorities currently face is the variety of ways in which fentanyl is being marketed to the consumer, not only in the form of tablets/pills but also nasal atomizers, nasal aerosols, injections, and in blotting paper. In closing, she mentioned the positive results of the “U.S. Fentanyl Characterization and Profiling Program,” the objective of which is to identify precursors and pre-precursors, suppliers, and delivery methods being used to produce and market fentanyl illicitly.

Wednesday, August 14

Presentation: United Nations Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs

- Martin Raithelhuber, Illicit Synthetic Drugs Expert, Laboratory and Scientific Section, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

Mr. Raithelhuber presented ([DOC.4](#)) the strategy on opioids and the UNODC *toolkit* on synthetic drugs. During his presentation, he also referred to other resources available from his organization to support countries in monitoring synthetic drugs and NPS, such as the early warning system and the Toxicology Portal. Regarding the opioid strategy, he emphasized the importance of establishing early warning systems, ensuring access to opioids for medical purposes, and establishing treatment and prevention systems. As for the toolkit on synthetic drugs, he explained that it is an online resource that gathers and brings together guidelines and good practices on the subject, including modules on forensic capacities, access to medicines, precursors, early warnings, prevention and treatment, and other areas. According to the presenter, the purpose of the toolkit is to strengthen the capacity for detection, identification, and safe handling of synthetic drugs, including synthetic opioids; to increase the judiciary’s capacity to prosecute cases on illicit manufacture and trafficking in synthetic opioids; as well as to strengthen public-private cooperation, including with the pharmaceutical industry, to prevent the diversion of precursors.

Presentation: Chemical Investigations: Keys to Success

- John F. Farmer, Senior Program Analyst, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

Mr. Farmer began his presentation ([DOC.6](#)) by describing the Diversion Control Division within the DEA. The objective of this division is to prevent, detect, and investigate the diversion of controlled chemical substances and products, as well as to guarantee their adequate and uninterrupted supply to meet legitimate medical, commercial, and scientific needs. He then made reference to the DEA's Special Investigation Units (SIUs), which are deployed on a global level. The SIUs seek to train, equip, and support specialized units within the antinarcotics forces of the host country, as well as to develop and share intelligence for detecting, counteracting, dismantling, and prosecuting international organizations engaged in drug trafficking. In this sense, he put special emphasis on the Chemical Investigations Sections (DOC) operating in certain countries of the region, mentioning the main types and quantities of substances recently seized by those units. Finally, he indicated that to ensure success in chemical investigations, it is essential to compile and preserve evidence and intelligence. In certain cases, this makes it possible to do "reverse engineering" of the source of chemical products, so as to be able to determine the point of diversion, sources involved, transport routes and methods, and other data. The presenter detailed protocols that are used by the United States in this regard, as well as different devices used to take samples.

Thursday, August 15

Presentation: COPOLAD Update on Chemical Precursors Control

- Gabriela Sosa, Consultant, Cooperation Programme between Latin America, the Caribbean, and the European Unit on Drugs Policies (COPOLAD)

Mrs. Sosa ([DOC.3](#)) presented an update of the work by COPOLAD in the area of precursors, particularly with regard to a bibliographical review being done to identify updated publications on the subject that can be used to support the technical work of states participating in the project. She also commented that, based on those materials, a final publication is being prepared that gathers lessons learned and good practices so that relevant authorities can take them into account when designing, updating, and developing evidence-based policies for the control of chemical precursors. As Mrs. Sosa noted, through a working method that combines virtual and in-person meetings, COPOLAD has compiled information of real and representative cases that control authorities in the participating countries have worked on, that highlight the difficulties encountered in the region when prosecuting cases of illicit trafficking of chemical precursors. In addition, such cases allow for reflection on the important role played by inter-agency cooperation as well as collaboration between states and the private sector.

Conclusions, commitments, and recommendations

During the meeting, it was determined that the CICAD Executive Secretariat will do a final review, in both English and Spanish, of the text that was worked on by the delegates and will send them the final version of the Model Regulations. In addition, those Model Regulations (Attachment I) will be submitted for approval during the sixty-sixth regular session of the Commission, to be held November 19-21 of this year in the city of Miami, with the United States serving as chair.

After the approval of the Model Regulations by the commissioners, the Executive Secretariat will dedicate efforts to provide technical assistance and training to the member states that require support in the implementation of those regulations, as they request, including with regard to the strengthening

of forensic laboratories in order to increase their capacity for detecting illicit drugs and new psychotropic substances (NPS) and synthetic drugs in particular.

In addition to working on the review and update of that document, the meeting included important presentations provided by Argentina, the United States, COPOLAD, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Those presentations were very well received by the delegates, who emphasized the need for the group to continue addressing technical-operational topics and facilitate the coordination of efforts among the various agencies involved in the supervision and control of chemical precursors.

In addition, the participants emphasized how important it is for the group to have a working dynamic that bears fruit continually and not just once a year when the group meets in person. They also emphasized the importance of the countries' participation in the programs led by the UNODC Laboratory and Scientific Section, in the context of its Opioid Strategy, such as the International Collaborative Exercise (*ICE*) Programme.

To achieve this, it was proposed that the group work during the next few months on creating a **technical guide on collecting evidence when investigating the diversion of chemical precursors** to be used to support the member states in the investigation and prosecution of cases. It will be presented to the group during its next meeting.

It was also proposed that the Executive Secretariat of the CICAD continue working with its strategic partners based on what already exists, avoiding duplication of efforts and maximizing existing resources.

Along these lines, it was suggested that the **technical guide on collecting evidence when investigating chemical precursors** take into consideration the advances the working group has made on chemical precursors in the Cooperation Programme between Latin America, the Caribbean, and the European Union on Drugs (COPOLAD), to be presented officially at the Fourth Precursors Week at the end of the year.

Thus, the design of the guide shall take into account good practices and lessons learned that were identified through the analysis of real cases of illicit trafficking of chemical precursors, as well as the difficulties encountered during investigation and prosecution in various ECLAC countries.

The Executive Secretariat will explore the possibility of presenting such cases at the next meeting of the group of experts in order to illustrate significant examples of challenges faced by various agencies when prosecuting cases of the diversion of chemical substances used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

Based on those case studies and information-sharing, dialogue and working sessions can be generated to enable delegates to incorporate good practices and lessons learned in their control work, under the pillars of inter-agency cooperation and cooperation among states, to include industry.

In addition to the Guides, the delegates considered it important to take up the recommendations made during the last meeting of the group of experts, held in Panama City, Panama in the month of May 2018, allowing for follow-up on the following topics:

- Principal challenges currently faced by the member states to control illicit trafficking in substances that can be used for the manufacture of illicit drugs;
- Measures for oversight/control of chemical precursors that are being carried out to mitigate those challenges, identifying those that have a novel or innovative component;
- Strengths and weaknesses of the current system of control of chemical precursors in the region and at the international level;
- Information-sharing mechanisms the countries use with regard to the international flow/control of chemical precursors;
- Names of chemical precursors the countries control at the national level that are not currently included in the 1988 U.N. Convention.

For this purpose, the Executive Secretariat will circulate a questionnaire that can be used to gather input from the member states on those topics, as well as invite them to provide additional inputs that can be used as the working basis for reference documents on them at the regional level.

With regard to the deadlines for compiling the information and next steps to be taken to ensure information-sharing on key topics in the control of precursor chemicals – not just during the group’s meetings but on a sustained basis, the Secretariat, in coordination with the *Chair Pro Tempore* will prepare a work schedule to be used as the basis for coordinating activities during the year.